



Alliant International University

# Center for Teaching and Excellence - Newsletter

June 2025

The Center for Teaching Excellence monthly newsletter provides information about events sponsored by the CTE as well as around the university and beyond. We also highlight resources available to Alliant faculty on the CTE site and elsewhere.

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## Center for Teaching Excellence News



### Searching the CTE Site

The CTE website is searchable. A small magnifying glass icon appears at the top right-hand corner of every page. It allows users to enter a word or phrase to search for a topic of interest. For example, a search for the word **Presentations** yields the following results.

- [Rubrics for Oral Presentations](#)
- [Role of Dissertation Committee Chairperson](#)
- [Planning a Class Session](#)
- [Faculty Use](#)
- [Redesigning Assignments](#)
- [Concerns about Generative Artificial Intelligence](#)
- [Authentic Assessment](#)
- [Universal Design for Learning](#)

## Upcoming Events



### Fall Webinar Series

#### Starting Strong: More Features in Canvas You Might Not Know About

August 28, 2025

Are your newest courses several screens of scrolling away? Do students seem to miss your announcements altogether? Are they watching your videos? How do you know? From taming an ever-expanding dashboard, to getting students to read announcements, and engage with your videos, with a few other useful things tucked in between, little known and even lesser-utilized Canvas features will be covered in this interactive session.

#### Two-Part Webinar Series: AI-Enhanced Learning: Designing Courses and Supporting Student Collaboration

*We invite you to join our two-part webinar series on integrating AI into higher education courses. Each session will focus on distinct aspects of AI integration, offering insights and practical approaches to enhance your educational practices. The first webinar will focus on integrating AI into course assignments during development, while the second will address how to help students collaborate with AI for existing course assignments.*

- **Designing with Intelligence: Embedding AI into Programs, Pedagogy, and Practice**

September 25, 2025 -

Artificial Intelligence is transforming education—not just through tools, but also through how we design learning itself. This webinar explores how educators can thoughtfully integrate AI into academic programs, create assignments that leverage AI's strengths, and empower students to use AI tools ethically and effectively.

- Supporting Students' Collaboration with AI: Promoting Responsible Use and Practical Application**  
 October 30, 2025  
 Discover how to shift the narrative from AI as a tool for shortcuts to AI as a collaborative partner in learning. This webinar will provide practical strategies for integrating AI education into your curriculum, emphasizing the importance of guiding students from misusing AI to mastering it as a way that is useful, accurate and ethical.

**Events On Demand**



**AI, Originality, and Accountability: Navigating Student Conversations**

By Diane Zelman, PhD, and Jeremy Bond, D.E.T.

[View Recorded Webinar](#)

[View Webinar Slides](#)

Join us for an engaging and interactive webinar focused on strategies for facilitating constructive, respectful conversations with students when there are concerns about the use—or overuse—of AI tools in course assignments. Using real-world examples, we will explore how to approach these sensitive dialogues in ways that uphold academic integrity while fostering student learning and growth.

Designed for faculty members, this session will support the development of mentorship skills, encourage reflection on evolving perspectives about AI, and promote thoughtful accountability in students' use of emerging technologies.

Topics will include:

- How to introduce the topic in syllabi, class discussions, and one-on-one meetings
- Setting and communicating clear expectations
- Engaging students in dialogue about originality and learning goals
- Guiding responsible, creative, and informed use of AI tools

**A Selection of AI Tools for Academia and Psychotherapy**

By Steven R. Thorp, PhD, ABPP

[View the recorded webinar](#)

[View the webinar slides](#)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools have been applied to business for several years, and in this webinar, Dr. Thorp will briefly describe AI, including potential benefits and points of caution. Participants will learn the policy of APA journals about AI, which can inform how instructors approach the tools. Participants will also learn novel ways in which AI could be used in coursework, preparing for licensure exams, learning academic and grant writing skills, teaching, and research. AI is already impacting the practice of psychotherapy, and some considerations about that use will be discussed. The webinar will include some examples to illustrate the use of AI tools, as well as specific apps that utilize AI.

**Resources from the Department of Online Teaching**



**A Three-Part Framework: Canvas Course Announcements as Micro-Lessons**

By Melissa Vervinck, D.E.T.

In an online classroom, [announcements](#) can be more than simple messages or notifications sharing information, reminders or updates. Think of them as succinct, impactful micro-lessons which can be designed to spark interest, deliver key concepts, and guide next steps. When instructors apply a three-part announcement model (Hook, Deliver, Direct) with a consistent scheduling strategy for creating them, announcements become strategic ways to foster engagement and learning.

**Framework Part 1: Hook**

When writing an essay, it is customary to be taught to start with a hook, such as a fact, statistic, question, or quote to capture the reader's interest. This technique can also be effective in encouraging students to read course announcements. Incorporating an engaging element that attracts attention and encourages

students to read your announcements can increase the likelihood of them doing so. One way to do this is to pose a question related to the weekly topic, such as, "Think announcements are just reminders? Think again: these micro lessons are your key to mastering each module." This style of introduction invites curiosity and sets the stage for meaningful content. Another effective strategy involves connecting the subject matter to current events, recent research findings, webinar opportunities, or news from professional organizations. Doing so introduces students to ideas and resources that they can continue to explore beyond your course. By creating interesting hooks, you help students overcome banner blindness and signal that your announcement is worth their attention.

### **Framework Part 2: Delivery**

Once you have captured their attention, present your core message in the form of a micro-lesson. This is a brief, focused segment of instruction aimed at teaching a specific concept or skill efficiently. Use the [Rich Content Editor](#) to integrate multimedia elements, such as hyperlinks, images, media, mathematical formulas and more. For interactive video content, [Canvas Studio](#) can be accessed here. Other ideas include linking to a brief two-question survey, a single-item quiz, or a [quick poll using Microsoft Forms](#). All can enhance engagement and accommodate various learning preferences. You might also ask students a question to [comment on](#) or share their thoughts on a topic directly within the announcement thread. By delivering these targeted instructions, students can receive timely reinforcement of key concepts while keeping the content manageable.

### **Framework Part 3: Direct**

Conclude your announcement with clear, actionable instructions. Clearly outline steps to complete assignments or highlight unusual deadlines. For example, "Post your initial response in the Week 6 Discussion by Wednesday at 11:59 PM instead of the usual Friday." When possible, [linking directly to Canvas activities](#) from the announcement will help students go to the right place with a single click. You might also prompt students to reflect with a takeaway in the [announcement thread](#). For example, "Reply to this announcement with one sentence describing your biggest insight from this week's reading." This reinforces learning and turns your announcement into a two-way communication tool.

### **Expert Tips for Sustainability**

Writing and sending helpful announcements throughout a course does not have to be overwhelming. Whether it's Mondays and Thursdays or after each module starts, begin by setting a consistent schedule as to when announcements are posted. This helps train students to look for your updates. Creating a simple announcement template with designated spots for the hook, delivery, and direct sections speeds up writing and ensures consistency. Then, vary text-only messages with things such as short videos, audio check-ins, infographics or other ideas you have. Lastly, batch writing and scheduling announcements to be delivered at a later date can save time. Blocking an hour each week to draft announcements in advance and using Canvas's [scheduling feature](#) to automate delivery makes it easier to maintain a steady flow of communication throughout the course.

### **Conclusion**

Next month, we will explore ways to verify if students are reading your announcements. Meanwhile, we would love to feature your tips! How do you encourage students to read and engage with your announcements? Please share your strategies with us at [Onlinelearningstaff@alliant.edu](mailto:Onlinelearningstaff@alliant.edu) and you may be featured in an upcoming article.

## **Teaching Tips**



### **First Generation Students**

According to Career Pathways data from the Council of Graduate Schools, 27% of doctoral students identify as first-generation, with higher percentages among some racial and ethnic groups and fields of study. Thus, 52% Hispanic or Latin, 51% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 41% Black or African American identified as first-generation doctoral students. By field of study, 35% of education PhD students were first-generation, 32% of health sciences PhDs identified as first-generation, contrasted with 19% in business. [Insights into First-Generation Doctoral Students](#)

Much of the research on first generation students has focused on undergraduates; however, some challenges identified for undergraduates may pertain to graduate students as well. These include academic, social, and economic barriers. First-generation graduate students may need support in transitioning to graduate school because achieving another first brings new uncertainties, expectations, and financial needs. Here are some recommendations for supporting first generation graduate students:

- Make what is hidden in coursework more apparent by increasing transparency.
  - Explain “common” class practices and expectations such as office hours, class participation, and group work.
  - Clearly communicate how to be successful in the course
    - Use rubrics to evaluate student work
    - Provide examples of strong and weak work
    - Offer regular, timely, and constructive feedback
    - Clearly articulate what students need to do to fulfill all class requirements
- Be mindful of language
  - Avoid language that is culturally specific that may not be familiar to all students
  - Explain acronyms, abbreviations, and other terminology
  - Avoid unfamiliar jargon
- Encourage students to seek appropriate help
  - Make help-seeking an integral part of important class activities
  - Be approachable and accessible to students who have questions or seek help
  - Share helpful tips (e.g., time management and planning skills, organizing tools, study methods)
- Create a welcoming environment and sense of belonging
  - Get to know students (e.g., learn their names and aspirations for the course)
  - Provide opportunities for student interactions and community building (e.g., group projects and collaborative learning activities)
- Consider students’ financial situation in setting requirements (e.g., course materials, activities, and additional time commitments)

For more on teaching First Generation Students, see [First Generation Students](#).

### Other Resources



#### How to Mentor Like a Coach

The author of this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article on [How to Mentor Like a Coach](#) argued that good academic mentors behave like coaches in focusing on helping a mentee solve a problem. She listed five pertinent coaching behaviors:

- Listen much more than you talk; let the mentee do most of the talking
- Ask “powerful” questions that aim to prompt the mentee to think in new and different ways rather than to control or micromanage
- Provide focus and structure by asking mentee to set the goal for each meeting and then making sure the conversation stays on track
- Don’t cut off improvisation when it seems to spark new thinking in the mentee
- Build people up, don’t tear them down; emphasize mentees strengths rather than weaknesses

### Shared Resources




#### Ways Students Can Partner with AI

Elon University Teaching & Learning Resources has listed eight ways AI can support students partnering with AI during the learning process:

- One-on-one virtual tutoring on course subjects or pre-requisite/supplementary knowledge
- Offering specific feedback on student work, or students critiquing and analyzing the work of AI
- Creating initial outlines for assignments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer brainstorming of new ideas, insight into alternative ways of thinking, or help narrow a topic</li> <li>• Be a debating partner, helping students build and find flaws or gaps in arguments</li> <li>• Help students refine their discussion or research questions, exploring the importance of how you ask a question</li> <li>• Take the role of an interviewee, allowing students to chat with a specific historical, fictional, or contemporary person or perspective</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for students to create art or remixes across genres</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Students Partnering with AI</a></p>
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**Faculty Well-Being and Success**

	<p><b>Deep Research</b></p> <p>In this edition of his Substack, <a href="#">Wonder Tools</a>, Jeremy Caplan presented information on how to use the AI “Deep Research” tool for doing research. According to Dr. Caplan, “New ‘Deep Research’ tools from ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity autonomously search and gather information from dozens — even hundreds — of sites, then analyze and synthesize it to produce comprehensive reports.” He listed 9 practical ways to use AI for Deep Research: (a) craft custom travel itineraries, (b) compile organization profiles, (c) research notable people, (d) explore complex concepts, (e) discover places in depth, (f) analyze debates and controversies, (g) gain insights in cultural works, (h) explore evolving trend, and (i) examine contexts of historical events. Along with noting cautions and caveats, he also provided tips on how to use Deep Research and how to craft effective queries. Finally, he compared key features and strengths and weaknesses to top platforms (ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity).</p>
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